

The Role of the Faithful

From the beginning of our diocesan discernment on the future care of our parishes, and when we chose the Families of Parishes model, the focus has been the mission of the Church. We knew that our parishes had to be mission-oriented, and that each of us, the ordained and the lay faithful, has a role to play.

Embracing a Future Full of Hope – A Pastoral Plan for the Diocese of London

Goal I: As living signs of Christ's presence, we will respond to the call to personal holiness given to all by committing ourselves to opportunities for ongoing conversion and spiritual renewal.

Goal II: Called by Christ, we will evangelize through the clear proclamation of the Gospel and the constant teaching of the Catholic faith, assuring that such proclamation and teaching is linked to the life experience of the people.

Each and every baptized person, as stated in Goal I, above, shares in the call to live a life of holiness. In the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and since, popes have invited the faithful to live the vocation and mission of their Baptism. Goal II, above, calls us to a life of evangelization; that is, of making Jesus and his saving message known and accepted by all throughout the world.

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Someone might be thinking: 'Not I, I'm no saint'. And yet, as we read through Sacred Scripture, God has a history of choosing people to serve who feel they are not qualified, who have limitations and flaws.

Saint Paul reminds us that God's grace is sufficient for us, for God's power is made perfect in our weakness (see 2 Cor 12). It is often through these flaws and the messiness of our lives that we discover that we can rely on God's help. Is there something stopping me from getting more involved in my parish community? The advice here is: be not afraid, work with others, and trust in the Lord!

"The Lord asks everything of us, and in return he offers us true life, the happiness for which we were created. He wants us to be saints and not to settle for a bland and mediocre existence. The call to holiness is present in various ways from the very first pages of the Bible" (Pope Francis, *Gaudium et Exsultate*, 1)

Do not be afraid to set your sights higher, to allow yourself to be loved and liberated by God. Do not be afraid to let yourself be guided by the Holy Spirit. Holiness does not make you less human, since it is an encounter between your weakness and the power of God's grace. For in the words of León Bloy, when all is said and done, "The only great tragedy in life, is not to become a saint" (Pope Francis, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, 34)

IN KEEPING WITH THE VATICAN II DECREE ON THE APOSTOLATE OF THE LAITY, WE MIGHT ASK THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

Who? Every baptized person, whatever their state in life, is called to evangelize. Working within the faith community, depending on God's assistance, leaning on the wisdom of the Church and its teachings, we can use our God-given talents to assist us in this calling.

What? We seek to live in Christ and to evangelize. We do this by applying Christian teachings to the problems of our day, living in solidarity, cooperating with people of good will, and working for the common good to promote justice, development and peace.

When and Where? In short, here and now. God has called us to live our faith at all times and in all places as citizens of this world and the next.

How? Led by the light of the Gospel and the teachings of the Church, and motivated by Christian charity, we are called to become more active in our parish and the broader community in imitation of Christ.

Why? We desire to grow closer to Jesus, to share the gospel, to make new disciples and to make the world a better place.

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"I invite all Christians, everywhere, at this very moment, to a renewed personal encounter with Jesus Christ, or at least an openness to letting him encounter them; I ask all of you to do this unfailingly each day. No one should think that this invitation is not meant for him or her, since 'no one is excluded from the joy brought by the Lord'" (Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, 47).